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dangerous upstart talent. How far this mischievous influence can be carried may be gathered from the position in which Sir Joshua Reynolds and his court managed to keep men like Wilson and Gainsborough. He who sees the productions of these men in company with those of their contemporaries, and who remembers the impression which Sir Joshua's writings had conveyed of their standing as artists, will perceive with surprise that they were not the victims of any overt act of misrepresentation, but that they were quietly and gently praised out of the rank due to them into an inferior one, by a union of real talent, constituted influence, and a sly, cool, consistent management.

Many of the ablest painters and sculptors of Europe have expressed to us directly and frankly the opinion that Academies, furnished though they be with all the means to form the eye, the hand and the mind of the pupil, are positively hindrances instead of helps to Art.

The great element of execution, whether in painting or in sculpture, is imitation. This is the language of Art. Almost all clever boys can learn this to a degree far beyond what is supposed. That objects be placed before them calculated to attract their attention and teach them the rules of proportion, while they educate the eye to form and color, no one will dispute; but the insisting upon a routine, the depriving them of all choice or volition, the giving a false preference to readiness of hand over power of thought, all these are great evils, and we fully believe that they fall with a withering force on those minds especially whose nourishment and guidance they were intended to secure—we mean on those minds which are filled with a strong yearning after excellence; warm sympathies, quick, delicate, and nice perceptions, strong will and a proud consciousness of creative power of mind, joined to diffidence of their capacity to bring into action the energies they feel within them. The paltry prizes offered for the best performances seldom rouse men of this order; they may create in such souls an unamiable contempt for their unsuccessful competitors; they may give to successful mediocrity inflated hopes, a false estimate of its own powers. As a substantial help they are worthless even to the tyro who wins them.

Leonardo da Vinci coiled a rope in his studio, and drew from it, with the subtlest outline and the most elaborate study of light and shade. "Behold!" said he, "my academy!" He meant to show that the elements of Art can be learned without the pompous array of the antique school or the lectures of the professor. Few will be tempted to follow his example; but even that were far better than a routine of instruction which, after years of drudgery and labor, sends forth the genius and the blockhead so nearly on a level with each other, the one manacled with precepts, the other armed with them at all points.

The above reflections have been drawn from us by the oft-repeated expressions of regret which we have listened to, "that from the constitution of our society, and the nature of our institutions, no influences can be brought to bear upon Art with the vivifying power of court patronage." We fully and firmly believe that these institutions are more favorable to a natural,

healthful growth of Art than any hot-bed culture whatever. We cannot (as did Napoleon) make, by a few imperial edicts, an army of battle painters, a hierarchy of drum-and-fife glorifiers. Nor can we, in the life-time of an individual, so stimulate this branch of culture, so unduly and disproportionately endow it, as to make a Wallhalla start from a republican soil. The monuments, the pictures, the statues of the Republic will represent what the people love and wish for—not what they can be made to accept, not how much taxation they will bear. We hope by such slow growth to avoid the reaction resulting from a morbid development; a reaction like that which attended the building of St. Peter's; a reaction like that consequent upon the outlay which gave birth to the royal mushroom at Versailles; a reaction like that which we anticipate in Bavaria, unless the people of that country are constituted differently from the rest of mankind.

If there be any youth toiling through the rudiments of Art, at the forms of the simple and efficient schools at New York (whose title is the only pompous thing about it), with a chilling belief that elsewhere the difficulties he struggles with are removed or modified, we call upon him to be of good cheer, and we believe—what from our hearts we are convinced of—that there is at present no country where the development and growth of an artist is more free, healthful, and happy than it is in these United States. It is not until the tyro becomes a proficient—nay, an adept—that his fortitude and his temper are put to tests more severe than elsewhere—tests of which we propose to speak more at large on a future occasion.*

HORATIO GREENOUGH.

THE WIND IN THE CASEMENT.

Written in ill health.

BY WM. BELL SCOTT.

SILENCE, oh Northeast Wind, thy saddening cry,
Silence, oh Wind, thine everlasting moan!
Is the child Innocence all naked thrown
Out on the freezing earth—is the great sky
Now made of lead for ever—nor again
May the heart cheer up, nor sweet lips be curled?
Silence, oh deadly Wind! Most sure the rain
That an indifferent and exacting world
Showers on us, the cold blast that ever blows
On one who wears no ermine, sings no song,
And finds no holidays, are enough strong
To give us daily aches and overthrows:
But, with thy ceaseless inorganic wail,
Like parting Providence—who would not fail?

TO THE ARTISTS CALLED P. R. B.

BY WM. BELL SCOTT.

I THANK you, Brethren in sincerity.
I who, within the circle of this Art,
The charmed circle, humbly stand apart,
Scornfully also, with a listless eye,
Sick of conventional vitality.
For ye have shown, with youth's brave confidence,
The honesty of true speech—that intense
Reality uniting soul and sense.
When Faith is strong, Art strikes its roots far down,
And bears both flower and fruit with seeded core:
When Faith dies out, the fruit appears no more,
But the flower bears a worm within its crown.
Rejoice, and shrink not. Once again Art's way
Shall be made odorous with new showers of May.

* Published in a Periodical in 1842.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MENDELSSOHN.

Dwight's Journal of Music contains a translation from the German, with the above heading, in which article are many thoughts of great value and interest to every one connected with the Art-world. Mendelssohn says:—

"If a man possesses talent, and yet manufactures ordinary trash, it is always his own fault. He does not employ his materials as he could employ them, were he in earnest. The most ordinary cause of ordinary compositions is a want of self-criticism and of an endeavor to improve. Had I printed everything *without altering*, there would be very little peculiar to remark in my works. If I am allowed to possess any peculiar characteristics, I am conscious, in my own mind, that I owe them *mostly* to my strict self-criticism and my habit of altering and striving to improve. I have turned and twisted the thoughts—how many times have I frequently done so with one and the same—in order to transform their original ordinary physiognomy into one more original, more important, and more effective."

In the course of conversation, his interlocutor asserts that—

"If we want to render ourselves a strict account of the impressions which musical compositions produce upon us, we find that many works do not please us at all—indeed, it is very seldom that we meet with one which satisfies us in every respect. In one case the melodic outline of the thought pleases us but not the accompaniment, or if the latter pleases, the harmony to it does not, and so on. Some persons, again, delight especially in the most vigorous thoughts, with a plentiful supply of brass instruments, while another individual, more delicately organized, does not like them, but prefers far more the finer, milder shades, &c. These likings and dislikings implanted in us, for productions of Art, constitute our *original individual dispositions*, and are, in their various degrees and combinations, intellectually, what the outward varieties of figure, bearing, and features are physically. In this respect, all men, or at least the great mass of individuals, possess a *disposition for idiosyncrasy*."

Mendelssohn then continues—"There is something in what you say. I presume that you deduce from this the fact that the artist must give the reins to his original disposition; that he should not, for instance, seek to remodel or modify it in obedience to the authority of great artists, or even prevailing views, and that, by this means, he can work, with full consciousness, towards the development of his idiosyncrasy?"

"That is certainly what I mean," I continued. "There are, as I have already said, few men without idiosyncrasy originally, but there are very few of them who possess such *independent minds* as to be able to develop themselves entirely in accordance with *their nature*; they allow themselves to be caught by other influences, by æsthetical arguments, by criticisms on their works, by celebrated men, who command a large public, &c. They think they will pursue a safer course by taking the road followed by such persons, than by following the manner that is naturally their own, and thus, from this constraint, to which they subject themselves, become more or less imitators."

"That is perfectly right," said Mendelssohn, interrupting me. "Such independence, however, I can claim for myself, for I have been conscious of it from my earliest youth upwards. I cannot remember a single occasion on which I ever said in my own mind: 'You shall write a trio, like such and such a one of Beethoven, or Mozart, or any other master,' but I wrote it in conformity with my own taste, according to what floated before me generally as pleasing. Thus, for instance, I never liked the boisterous brass in-